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LASHES OUT AT SOVIET CRITIC

Solzhenitsyn's Ex-Wife Defends Him

By DAN FISHER
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MOSCOW—Natalya Reshetovskaya, the divorced wife of author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, is a lonely pensioner now, shunned by most of her former husband's friends. But she finds solace and purpose in the letters, notes and diaries he wrote so long ago.

"There's nobody in Moscow today who thinks about Solzhenitsyn more or defends him more than his former wife," a friend said recently.

That statement may surprise some who recall that her name was associated with harsh, officially supported criticism of Solzhenitsyn at the time of his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1974.

But now Reshetovskaya has written a blistering letter to the author of a new book on the CIA, branding as an "irresponsible lie" a charge that her former husband wrote his famous novels under the auspices of the American intelligence agency.

A copy of the letter, dated April 9, was given to The Times by a friend of Reshetovskaya, who said she was afraid to meet Western correspondents herself.

The book she criticized is titled "CIA Against the USSR." It was written by Nikolai N. Yakovlev, an Americanologist and polemicist who has frequently attacked Solzhenitsyn's work. It was published early this year by Moloday Guardia (Young Guard) publishers, an arm of the Young Communist League, which is known as a mouthpiece for the views of the most nationalistic and conservative elements in the Soviet leadership.

Yakovlev devotes more than 50 pages of the 287-page book to Solzhe-

nitsyn, accusing him of being a facist and a traitor. He says that Solzhenitsyn wrote his eloquent denunciations of Stalinism as part of a CIA-directed psychological war against the socialist countries.

"Operation Solzhenitsyn was launched by the CIA in full opposition to the Soviet order, to that which is dear to all Soviet people," he wrote.

Reshetovskaya, a childhood friend of Solzhenitsyn who married him in 1940 and lived with him during the years after his release from a Stalinist camp, years in which he wrote most of his best-known works, replied in her letter:

"Unfortunately, Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn has disappointed me much in recent years. I cannot say that at present I approve of, of his current activities, as I used to be able to say. However, most of what N. Yakovlev has written about Alexander Isayevich in 'CIA Against the USSR' disturbed me deeply as a most irresponsible lie."

The nine-page letter, which Reshetovskaya is said to have delivered personally to a reportedly startled and embarrassed Yakovlev at his Moscow home, makes no judgments about the new book as a whole. But it is a scathing, point-by-point rebuttal to Yakovlev's assertions about the inspiration for Solzhenitsyn's work.

Yakovlev contends in his book that the CIA provided the "spiritual food" which "imparted a specific taste and odor to the works of Solzhenitsyn."

Reshetovskaya countered: "Solzhenitsyn received the spiritual food that gave birth to his works in Soviet prisons and camps where, incidentally, the father of these books stayed—Solzhenitsyn himself."

Reshetovskaya wrote that "Yakovlev's charge against Solzhenitsyn... like those in the well-known court trials in the 1930s," when Stalin's purges sent millions to their deaths before firing squads or in the camps. "And how much insulting indifference there is here (in Yakovlev's book) to the tens of thousands of prisoners who languished and died in the camps in 30 years!"

Reshetovskaya, a biologist, met Solzhenitsyn in their student days in

Rostov-on-Don, an industrial city about 600 miles south of Moscow. They married a year before the German invasion of World War II.

With the outbreak of war, Solzhenitsyn went to the front. His young wife was evacuated to Soviet Central Asia, where she worked as a teacher. "He loved her mindlessly," according to a friend who knew them both well.

Solzhenitsyn wrote her daily during the war, and at one point she disguised herself in a Red Army uniform and, with the help of a friend, went to live briefly with him at the front.

Solzhenitsyn was arrested in 1945 and sentenced to eight years in prison camps for intemperate remarks he wrote to a friend about the Stalin regime. Later, he was sent into permanent exile.

After years of separation and at Solzhenitsyn's urging, Reshetovskaya remarried while he was in exile in Kazakhstan.

After Nikita S. Krushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956, and the subsequent rehabilitation of Solzhenitsyn and thousands of other prisoners, Reshetovskaya left her second husband and rejoined the author.

Reshetovskaya was the model for the wife of the hero in Solzhenitsyn's novel "First Circle." She typed and proofread the manuscripts for that work and several others, including "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," "Gulag Archipelago," "Cancer Ward," and "August 1914."

The couple split up in 1970, after Solzhenitsyn met Natalya Svetlova, his present wife. Reshetovskaya remained his legal wife until they were divorced officially in 1973, so Solzhenitsyn could marry Svetlova.

The parting was bitter, according to friends, and it was during this period that a denunciation of Solzhenitsyn said to have been written by Reshetovskaya was circulated abroad by the official Novosti press agency. It accused the exiled Nobel Prize winner of being an anti-Semitic Russian nationalist. Reshetovskaya later disavowed portions of the Novosti account.